

Ambitious Approach – Our Approach to Education Practice

Ambitious about Autism's mission is to stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities. We believe all autistic children and young people have a right to the best education that will support their quality of life, meet their needs, and help them thrive in the world, as they are. In addition to our direct work in schools and colleges, we work to transform policy and practice in autism education nationally.

We have high aspirations for our pupils and learners. Our goal for all our pupils and learners is that when they leave our settings, they will enjoy a good quality of life according to what that means for them, including having the opportunity to access employment, further education or training and to live as part of the communities of their choice.

Our Ambitious Approach across all our educational settings is person-centred, values based, trans-disciplinary and underpinned by a whole-organisational Positive Behaviour Support framework.

Our curriculum focuses on the knowledge and skills that support quality of life and we customise it in line with pupils' and learners' interests, strengths and ambitions. When delivering the curriculum, staff ensure that individuals' emotional and physical needs are met so they can learn. We utilise the teaching and learning methods that are best suited to individual learning objectives, and teaching staff have a good understanding of autism and draw upon this knowledge to facilitate progress. We only use approaches and interventions that afford dignity, respect and compassion. We are constantly developing, searching for and are open to new approaches where there is robust evidence that they help young people and are ethical. We share our experience and evidence with others to enhance knowledge and expertise in the field of autism education.

Participation

Pupils and learners are involved in decisions about their learning, support and future. Their voices and opinions are valued. For many pupils and learners, communication can be difficult, so we invest skills and resources in enabling their participation in a variety of ways.

We also recognise the enormous importance of working together with parents and carers as co-producers to ensure that the partnership between school or college and home works for the child or young person and to plan for the future.

Utilising all available expertise

We recognise that expertise comes in different forms. Young people and their families have valuable expertise through experience, and we combine this with expertise from skilled and dedicated education and allied health professionals. Qualified teachers and education support staff, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, behaviour analysts and employment specialists work closely together with pupils, learners and their families, to provide integrated and appropriate support. Our specialists are on-site and embedded in our settings.

All staff receive regular training and support to ensure that they have the skills, knowledge and understanding to effectively deliver the Ambitious Approach. Staff are regularly supervised and supported. We also invest in continuous professional development, including an in-house autism-specific training programme (based on a competency framework), teacher training via Schools Direct, training and talks from external experts and the opportunity of post-graduate study.

Personal development, behaviour and safety

The safety and wellbeing of pupils and learners is paramount. We have child and adult safeguarding policies and processes in place, which are implemented holistically and rigorously and reviewed at least annually to ensure they reflect latest requirements and best practice. We focus on creating a whole organisational approach to safeguarding, which includes checks, training, information and briefings for all trustees, governors, staff and volunteers. Pupils and learners are also supported to understand these issues via the curriculum.

Progress and attainment

Children and young people in our education settings mostly have Education, Health and Care Plans, which outline their aspirations, outcomes, needs and support. Our trans-disciplinary teams work collaboratively with autistic young people and their parents and carers to input into and develop these plans and ensure they are implemented. Progress is regularly and comprehensively monitored, evaluated and reported. We tailor how we teach to match the individual child or young person, and we also measure whether the approach is working. This helps to ensure that pupils and learners make the best progress they can. Pupils and learners have access to a range of qualifications, as well as non-accredited learning, depending on their interests, desired outcomes and abilities.

Accountability

Each setting has a Governing Body comprising a range of people with the knowledge, skills and experience needed to support and challenge our settings, including parents and carers. The Governing Bodies meet regularly and visit the settings to review and monitor their performance.

Information on progress and outcomes is made available at annual reviews, to parents and carers and Local Authorities and reported termly to the Governing Bodies. We also have a [board-level Education Committee](#) that oversees performance across all of our settings. We welcome visitors to our settings and regularly hold open days for parents and carers and professionals.

Our settings are subject to Ofsted inspections, which are published online, both on our settings' websites and by Ofsted.

Notes

For more information on Positive Behaviour Support, refer to <http://pbsacademy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/PBS-key-messages-April-2017-1.pdf>